Claims

We claim:

1. A method for managing settings in a computer system, comprising:
receiving a selection of a setting;
determining an inheritance state for the selected setting;
displaying a graphical indication of the inheritance state of the selected setting.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the graphical indication of the inheritance state indicates at least one state chosen from the group consisting of: the selected setting is inherited by another setting, the selected setting is inheriting from another setting, the selected setting is both inheriting from another setting and is being inherited by another setting, and the selected setting is not inheriting or being inherited.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the graphical indication of the inheritance state indicates at least one state chosen from the group consisting of: the selected setting can inherit or be inherited, and the selected setting cannot inherit or be inherited.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying a graphical indication of the inheritance relationship between the selected setting and at least one related setting.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the at least one related setting comprises a setting that is not currently in an inheritance relationship with the selected setting.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the graphical indication of the inheritance relationship comprises an inheritance indicator.

7. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
receiving a change inheritance relationship command; and
changing the inheritance relationship for the selected setting.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising determining whether changing the inheritance relationship for the selected setting will affect other settings.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying a current value for the selected setting.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the current value is displayed using a control type used by a managed application for the selected setting.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving a change inheritance state command; and
changing the inheritance relationship for the selected setting.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising determining whether changing the inheritance relationship for the selected setting will affect other settings.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising updating the other settings.

14. A inheritance manager for an IT system, comprising:

a control widget associated with a selected setting, the control widget comprising an inheritance state indication and a current value for the selected setting; and

an inheritance relationship indicator that indicates the inheritance relationship between the selected setting and at least one other setting.

15. The inheritance manager of claim 14, further comprising a property widget associated with the at least one other setting.

16. The inheritance manager of claim 16, wherein the inheritance relationship indicator comprises a graphical connector connecting the control widget to the property widget.

17. The inheritance manager of claim 16, wherein the relative positions of the control widget and the property widget indicate an inheritance relationship between the selected setting and the at least one other setting.

18. The inheritance manager of claim 14, wherein control widget displays the current value using a control type used by a managed application to display the selected setting.

19. The inheritance manager of claim 14, wherein control widget displays the current value using a control type used by an operating system to display the selected setting.

20. A computer program product, comprising:

(a) a program configured to perform a method for managing settings in a computer system, the method comprising:

receiving a setting selection;
determining an inheritance state for the selected setting;
displaying a graphical indication of the inheritance state of the selected setting.

(b) a signal bearing media bearing the program.

21. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the signal bearing media is chosen from the group consisting of: a non-writable storage media, a writable storage media, and a communications medium, such as through a computer or telephone network.

22. A method for managing instances of an application in an IT system, comprising:

(a) launching an inheritance manager, the inheritance manager comprising:

a control widget associated with a selected setting for one instance of an application, the control widget comprising an inheritance state indicator and a current value indicator; and

an inheritance relationship indicator that indicates the inheritance relationship between the selected setting and at least one other setting;

(b) selecting the control widget associated with a desired setting for an instance of the application;

(c) modifying the current value for the desired setting; and

(d) modifying the inheritance state for the desired setting.